



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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woman, or many others, as well as his own wife—we should hesitate about knowing him.

But the other kind of love, the love of our neighbour, of man as man, is a wholly different thing: it is not a personal affection, but rather a tone, a temper, an attitude of mind, a disposition: as individuality and therefore, if you will, narrowness, is the essential element of the one kind of love, so universality (in which the very thought of individuality is lost) is the very essence of the other.

And so I take it that this wider love consists mainly in a readiness, a forwardness, an enthusiastic desire (if you will) to do justice to others, to recognize their claims, their rights, to be kind, to be courteous, considerate, in a word "to do to others as we would they should do unto us." And so, we may love our country with a personal love that thrills our nature through, and in the power of that love we will be ready to work for her, to fight for her, if need be to die for her, but, above all, to care for her honour, to desire, and, as far as may be, secure, that her conduct, her attitude towards other nations, her influence *in* the world and *upon* the world, shall be high and noble, just and pure, free from all taint of merely selfish ambition or ignoble and unworthy aims or jealousies: and so may a pure and lofty patriotism *further* and not *hinder*, amongst the nations and the colonies that form her mighty empire, amongst the great nations that are her worthy compeers, and even amongst the nations of a lower civilization, the barbarous races that feel her power,—peace and goodwill to all mankind.

HINTS BY THE WAY.

CHILDREN AND RELATIONS.—The presence of relations in the house for a long or short time is often, unfortunately, a cause of friction between parents and children, and of grievous disappointment and perplexity to the former. You are looking forward to a visit from your mother's cousin, whom you have always looked upon as the family saint and a paragon of all womanly virtues, and thinking what a pleasure it will be to introduce her to your flock; but, alas, for the result! *She*, strong in the traditions of an era when little folks were habitually kept under on principle, cannot tolerate the freedom accorded to the modern child, and, with the kindest feeling towards her young relations, is constantly rubbing them the wrong way; *they*, looking at her with younger other eyes than yours, will be keenly alive to her little foibles and peculiarities, and not at all disposed to submit to her dictation. If they express themselves freely to you on the subject, listen patiently without seeming shocked or angry. Painful though it be to you to hear your idol criticised by irreverent young tongues, you must remember that the retaining of perfect confidence between parents and children is worth almost any sacrifice—for how can you train their minds unless you know what is in them? Try, therefore, to enter calmly and dispassionately into the subject, insisting of course on a certain measure of respect in speaking of a relation, but on no account maintaining that whatever she does is right, just because she is "dear, good cousin Jane" (even though you may think so yourself), and you may be able to soften down much that offends them. You can tell the little ones that when cousin Jane was young, boys and girls were scarcely allowed to speak in the presence of their parents, so they must be on extra good behaviour while she is there, or she will think them sadly spoilt; if they are standing on the dignity of their teens, you can tell them that when people get to be as old as cousin Jane they are apt to

count all who are younger than themselves among the children, "so you must not think anything of it if she talks to you big girls as though you were little ones."

When little ructions occur, as they will in the best regulated families, do not take them too seriously, or decide against the children without careful investigation. The naughtiest child may sometimes be in the right, and the most saintly elder in the wrong, and some of the latter class have a knack of causing intense irritation in others through their lack of judgment and of the most elementary knowledge of human nature. We must never outrage a child's sense of justice (which is very keen in some children, and all the more so for the lack of judgment which accompanies it) by deciding in favour of the elders *as such* and without reference to the actual merits of the case, and we have to remember that no visitors are so unpopular with children as those on whose account they are constantly in disgrace. Even if you find cousin Jane offended to weeping-point by some blunt speech of one of the youngsters (which seems sacrilege to you) do not at once fall upon him for the enormity of having made dear cousin Jane cry, but advise him gently to be more careful in his speech, assuming as a matter of course that he did not mean to be rude; but do not be too hurt at *her* if she points out the child's defects to you—it is quite possible *she* may see things that *you* are too near at hand to perceive. Where the offensive utterance was provoked by a reprimand from cousin Jane, it is better to sympathise with natural feelings of irritation at being chidden by one who is only a visitor in the house than to enlarge on the kindness of those who thus try to improve the characters of their young friends. At the same time they may be told that what seems unwarrantable interference is often a blessing in disguise, and that many have learnt to be grateful for the correction of their faults even by those who had no right to correct them.

Parents are often disappointed when their children do not "take to" those relations who are their own special favourites—when they show but a tepid regard for noble, self-sacrificing aunt Esther, the guardian angel of their father's boyhood, and give their whole hearts to good-natured, inconsequent aunt Carrie, whose thoughtlessness made her something of a cross to the rest of her family; when they shrink

from good, sensible uncle Charles, who has always been such a tower of strength to mother and aunties, and adore gay, fun-loving uncle Dick, whom the latter chiefly remember as the incorrigible tease of their girlish days. It *is* vexatious, I will allow; but we must submit to the inevitable, and not try to force the young affections to flow in ready-made channels. One precaution we may take, and that is to avoid overpraising those for whom we wish to win our children's regard, either before or after they have made each other's acquaintance. In the former case high commendations often lead to undue expectations—and the youthful ideal of perfection in an elder probably differs widely from yours; in the latter they are apt to become a weariness and to create a prejudice against, rather than in favour of, their object. "I'd rather be like an aunt that was'n't quite so good," declared a sharp child of five, to whom the wish "Ah! if you would only grow up like aunt Bessie!" had been reiterated *ad nauseam*. She did not mean to disparage aunt Bessie's virtues; but she was only tired of hearing about them. Instead of wearying the children by perpetually dwelling upon aunt Esther's or cousin Jane's excellencies, we had better bring forward (not too obtrusively) particular instances in which they have been displayed; an ounce of fact is worth a pound of statement.

Sometimes it may be necessary to demand little sacrifices on behalf of the honoured guest; a bedroom must be given up, or an afternoon's fun foregone, to accompany auntie or grandmamma to a dull lecture; let us not claim this as a right, or assume that it will be considered a privilege (unless, indeed, we have to deal with such happy dispositions that we can fearlessly take that tone), but ask it as a favour, appealing to the child's own best feelings, and pointing out that a hostess always considers her guests' wishes before her own.

YOUNG FRIENDS AND OUR DEALINGS WITH THEM.—May I offer a hint or two as to our dealings with young friends who may be very dear to us, but over whom we have no actual authority, though the intensity of our interest in them sometimes leads us to assume it,—a great mistake, since it robs us of the influence we above all things desire to retain. We should always remember that we have no right (except as delegates of a parent or guardian) to issue direct commands

even to the children of our own relatives, unless in the case of those so young as to be considered under the control of whatever grown-up person they may be with at the time, and any attempt to do so is sure to be resented by all but the meekest natures. (Of course these remarks do not apply to a relative who has lived in the family long enough to be looked upon almost as a third parent.) I know how natural it comes, say to a governess visiting the home of a former pupil, to exercise censorship over her behaviour, and correct her for every little dereliction of duty; therefore it behoves such a visitor to hold herself well in check—even where no irritation is shown it may be felt all the same. Where it is shown openly we must meet it, not by standing on our dignity and treating the offender like a naughty rebellious child,—as I have seen some excellent people unwisely do, and that not in a case of gross or wanton insolence, but of one of those little outbursts of snappiness which even “nice” young people occasionally give way to,—but in a gentle and conciliatory manner: the soft answer that turneth away wrath is our only hope of retrieving the mistake. Such a rejoinder as “My dear, I am very sorry you have taken my words amiss. Perhaps I said too much, but my strong affection for you led me to speak strongly,” or something to that effect, can scarcely fail to soothe and mollify.

But it may be said, is it not our duty to try to check what is wrong, especially where those in authority are indifferent or unobservant? Certainly; but laying aside such gross offences as even a stranger might feel called on to rebuke sternly, there are ways of correcting minor faults without making ourselves obnoxious, as we shall surely do if we come down sharply upon individual lapses from right: *e.g.*, “Alice, you spoke very improperly to your mother to-day”; or, “Kate, did you remember to do what what your father always likes done after lunch?”

It is easy to convey a hint by laying down general principles, as on the importance of attending to home duties, etc.; and then if the occasion seem propitious we may go on very gently and delicately to something more personal. “I fear, dear Alice, from little things I have noticed, that you are not always as careful in this respect as you might be,” and so on. Perhaps the least offensive form of rebuke is the

playful one: “You’ll think me a dreadful old meddler, Kate, but I feel as if I must just say a word to you about, etc.” If even this gives umbrage, we must just hold our peace and be patient.

In the case of young people temporarily committed to our charge, complaints to parents are to be eschewed as much as possible: the parents will always be best pleased for us to err on the side of over-indulgence, and especially where the offence is one against our personal dignity we should do well to put the telescope to the blind eye. Serious wrong-doing, or open repudiation of our authority may sometimes make an appeal to higher powers necessary, but this should not be resorted to without due warning to the rebels, who will then have their fate in their own hands. If the parents are disposed to take sharp measures on any complaint we make, we should do our best to beg off the culprits, and be ready to forgive royally whatever we have against them; if the matter is lightly passed over we can but accept the inevitable. Our relations with the offenders will naturally be a little strained for some time to come, but when we next meet them after a temporary break in our intercourse, we shall do well to condone the past and greet them kindly and cordially.

CHILDREN AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS.—We make a great mistake when we generalize about children—talking as if there were certain characteristics common to them all. Children, we say, are frank, trustful, submissive, and so on; but it all depends on the child. We might as well say, grown-up people are patient, wise, clever, &c.

We are apt to speak as if children’s days were all sunny ones; but childhood, even in the best ordered home, has its special trials and vexations from which adult life is free. A child’s desires are constantly being thwarted; all his actions are subject to the control of others; his whole life is passed under a despotism—a necessary one, and probably a benevolent one, but for all that sufficiently trying. There are some happy natures (and also some stolid ones) to whom whatever is, is right, and especially if decreed by their parents, but other more independent spirits are constantly fretting against the decisions of the powers that be, and longing for the day of emancipation when they can regulate their lives according to their own sweet will, instead of having every hour planned out for them. Early bedtime is a constantly

recurring trial that comes very hard on not a few young folks—in spite of the fancy pictures so often drawn of cherub faces nodding over their evening prayers, and hardly touching the pillow before they are wrapt in slumber. It may be true enough of some, but to others "good-night" is the most uncongenial word in their vocabulary. As a well-known novelist has said, "That word (bedtime) is always a damper to young spirits. Children hear their elders talk of wanting to go to bed, and wonder at such a perverted taste. There is always a sense of humiliation in that premature banishment. The grown-ups sit smiling and talking, and one feels that their evening is only just beginning, while nurse conducts the little ones to premature night and darkness that seems endless."

Here I would suggest that a nervous, active-brained child, apt to lie long awake, should not be allowed to sleep in the room with a grown-up person who comes to bed two or three hours later; the habit of remaining awake, once engendered, will become fixed, and the child be "a poor sleeper" through life.

Children, we say, soon forget their troubles; yet small trials often fall more heavily on the child-nature than on that of the adult; the young mind cannot as a rule bring reason and philosophy to bear upon its crosses as the more mature can; it only knows "A child's blind sense of wrong and pain." Nor can a child take refuge in those distractions which are open to ourselves in moments of worry and vexation. Young heroes of fiction may, indeed, fly to the woods and fields and sob out their woes into the bosom of mother nature, but in actual life they are always under the *surveillance* of nurse or governess, and find such consolations quite out of the question.

In dealing with these young fretters let us not make too light of their troubles. It is easy to say "you have nothing to complain of; you are loved and cared for, and denied nothing that is good for you," but that does not meet the present distress. Better try to make them feel that the very things they find so hard to bear are an essential part of the training which is to fit them for playing their parts in the world of men and women. Great fretters are often great thinkers, and therefore more amenable to reason.

We sometimes tell them "we grown-up people often have to do things we don't like"; but after all there is a great difference between submitting to circumstances and to the arbitrary will of some older person, however worthy. If *we* have that to do, we like it no better than the little ones—unless indeed the control is exercised by someone under whom we have deliberately placed ourselves, whereas the child has no option first or last. A little girl I knew, who in her earlier youth was taught at home by a kind elder, used to feel much aggrieved if she did not get a half-holiday every time a playfellow wanted her company for a walk, "but after I began attending school," she said, "I never even thought of wishing such a thing."

To children who are always fancying that other families have privileges that are denied them, I would recommend the perusal of a capital story which was published thirty or forty years ago,—*"The Discontented Children,"* by Mary and Elizabeth Kirby (Griffith and Farran). Possibly it is now out of print, but is well worthy of a re-issue.

Again, we speak of children as being easily amused, and quote, "I would I were the little trifter once again, who could be pleased so lightly"; but with some natures the art of amusing oneself and finding interests in life is one that grows as life advances. "When I was a little girl," said a friend to me, "I often felt bored, though a great deal was done to amuse me and make me happy; *now* I find life all too short for the interests that surround me."

If we lay down certain characteristics as belonging to childhood, we are apt to look coldly on those children in whom they are lacking, though after all they may be very estimable little folk. "I like children to *be* children," says a maiden aunt who has undertaken the charge of an orphan niece; "I can't understand a little girl who doesn't care for dolls, and always wants to be reading and studying. When *I* was a child I could amuse myself with my toys for hours at a time; but Maud has no idea of such a thing, nor yet of running and jumping about, and I am quite at a loss what to do with her in her playtime, especially in winter, when she has to be kept in a great deal, being delicate. I can't have her addling her brains with constant reading."

Certainly not, my dear friend, but since she is evidently an

active-minded child, which is a very different thing from being active in body, you must find some employment for her leisure which will occupy her brain without over-taxing it. Such children often take pleasure in sorting and classifying: she would very likely enjoy arranging and writing an inventory of any curiosities or interesting odds and ends that you may possess. This, if neatly done, would while away a good many fallow hours; so would a catalogue of her own books, or of all the books in the house (supposing your library to be of moderate proportions), with the author's name appended to each. You can regulate her indulgence in fiction by allowing her to read only one chapter at a time. Then, when the book is finished, let her write from memory a sketch of its contents before beginning another. That these employments partake of the nature of lessons will be no disqualification in the eyes of a girl of the type I am thinking of.

It is scarcely necessary to say that for a child living in the country, collections of dried flowers, ferns, and other natural objects, provide endless occupation. And, where these are not available, she might find amusement in arranging and cataloguing any curiosities, relics of the past, or other interesting odds and ends that the house contains, with the histories attaching to them, if such there be.

"But," says Auntie, "all this will not help to make Maud a useful domestic woman, such as I should like to see her." True; but since she has tastes above her years, it is very likely that if you were to appoint her a few little household duties to attend to, she would take pride and pleasure in fulfilling them, though she might take none in the arranging of a dolls' house. In the same way you might entrust her for a certain period with a doll, not as a plaything, but a *charge*, to be treated like an actual baby, and washed, fed, dressed and put to bed at the proper times,—also letting her make its clothes. I venture to say she will take far more interest in doing this as a *task* than as a pastime. Probably, like many literary children, she has no taste for needlework, but the stimulus of making a frock for a poor child's doll, or, better still, for the poor child's self, often has a magical effect in turning drudgery into delight.

One caution may be added,—do not be always calling attention to her idiosyncracies, either favourably or otherwise.

She is only following a natural instinct, which in itself deserves neither praise nor blame.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INDOOR OCCUPATIONS.—The making of scrap-books provides perennial occupation for intelligent children. Encourage them to keep a number of different books,—one for history, one for zoology, one for Scriptural subjects, and so on,—each to be filled with pictures and appropriate cuttings of printed matter connected with its own special subject. The most useful scrap-book is one of brown paper, which can be made at home (or sometimes bought for a penny), and covered afterwards with embroidered canvas, etc., or painted American cloth. The cheap, flashy-looking scrap-books which are sold for a few pence wear out in no time.

Postmarks. Let the children cut out all the different ones that come to the house, and sort them in envelopes according to their counties. A sort of game may then be played with them, thus:—empty them all out on the table, face downwards, and let each child pick one out in turn and say to which envelope it belongs; if the guess is wrong, the postmark passes to the next—if right, it is placed in the envelope and the guesser receives a counter; the one who has most counters of course wins the game. Or the postmarks may be laid out face upwards, and the teacher hold up an envelope to be filled, each child taking it in turn to choose a town belonging to it.

Famous Names. Let the children print neatly on cards a number of christian names; these are kept in a bag, which is handed to each to draw from at random; if the first player draw, say, George, he mentions some famous person who has borne that name, *e.g.*, George Washington; the next mentions some other well-known George, and so on round the circle. Any one failing to give a name in the first round, pays a counter; in the second round all who give a name *receive* a counter; in the third round, two counters, and so on. This game, as well as the preceding one, might be expanded and improved upon in various ways, as the ingenuity of teacher or children could suggest. The names might be chosen either from history or contemporary public life; where there is a doubt about the admissibility of any name, a vote of all the players should be taken.